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Letter dated 31 July 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Burundi to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the statement issued by the Government of Burundi following the Fifteenth Summit Meeting of the Regional Peace Initiative on Burundi, held in Arusha on 23 July 2001.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Marc **Nteturuye**
Ambassador
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Annex to the letter dated 31 July 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Burundi to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Statement issued by the Government following the Fifteenth Summit Meeting of the Regional Peace Initiative on Burundi, held in Arusha on 23 July 2001

I. Introduction

1. Following the recent meeting of the signatories to the Arusha Agreement and the Fifteenth Summit Meeting of the Regional Peace Initiative on Burundi, the Government would like to address three topics:

- Developments in the peace process;
- The next stages of the peace process;
- The need to create a new climate conducive to peace and national reconciliation.

II. Developments in the peace process

2. Since the signing of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi on 28 August 2000, two issues have remained core concerns for the people of Burundi and all those who are closely following the progress of our peace process.

The first is the question of the Agreement's implementation, particularly the establishment of transitional institutions, and the second is the question of the ceasefire.

3. With respect to the leadership of the transition, the signatories, the Facilitator and the Summit of heads of State of the subregion, following a wide-ranging process of consultation with the people of Burundi, have designated the current President and Mr. Domitien Ndayizeye to serve as President and Vice-President, respectively, for the first 18 months of the transition.

4. At the Fifteenth Summit, the future Transitional President and Vice-President undertook a series of commitments, nearly all of which, in essence, are contained in the Arusha Agreement.

5. Their implementation of the Arusha Agreement will involve, inter alia:

- Implementing the Agreement's provisions;
- Including the signatories in the transitional institutions;
- Repatriating refugees and reintegrating the *sinistrés* with the help of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR);
- Guaranteeing the exercise of political freedoms;
- Releasing political prisoners in accordance with the recommendations of the Commission of International and Burundian Experts to be established;

- Providing protection to all political leaders, in particular through the establishment of a new special protection unit whose composition is acceptable to all parties;
- Carrying out the agreed reforms of the defence and security forces, inter alia by integrating armed groups as soon as possible;
- Seeking assistance from African and international troops and from United Nations peacekeeping forces in maintaining peace and security;
- Providing for the equitable representation of Burundian communities in the civil service;
- Cooperating with the Implementation Monitoring Committee for the Agreement;
- Leaving office at the end of the first 18-month phase of the transition period.

6. The conditions which have been mentioned frequently in recent days mean just that. On the other hand, the commitment to implement the Agreement goes well beyond these 11 conditions and concerns not only the President and Vice-President of the Republic. All signatory parties must be fully involved and must assume their share of responsibility, which will increase appreciably with their new status as co-manager.

7. At this stage in the peace process, the latest decisions taken at Arusha undeniably constitute a significant step forward. The impact of this breakthrough will depend on whether the new transitional institutions can unite around a common programme, the priority of which continues to be the search to end the violence and for a ceasefire.

8. On the crucial issue of ceasefire negotiations, we must point out that, thanks to the joint efforts of the Facilitator, Nelson Mandela, the Vice-President of South Africa, the President of Gabon and the international community as a whole, contacts are being made in South Africa between the Government party and the forces of the Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie and the Front pour la défense de la démocratie (CNDD-FDD) to launch a continuous process of negotiations which might put an end to the violence, which is what the people of Burundi have longed for for so long. We hope that a similar meeting will be held in the near future with the Forces nationales de libération (FNL).

9. Without a ceasefire, implementation of the Arusha Agreement and establishment of the transitional institutions will be more difficult, for objective reasons which are obvious and which we need not go into so as not to relaunch the debate on that subject. In the absence of a ceasefire, the mission of the new transitional institutions will be to secure an end to hostilities and to implement those provisions of the agreement which can be implemented notwithstanding the context of continuing violence.

10. The difficulties stem not only from the persistence of the war in a number of localities in Burundi. In fact, great tension has developed around the issue of the leadership of the transition, together with an unhealthy climate, the most striking manifestations being the two attempted coups d'état of 18 April and 23 July 2001.

11. Today such actions are insane and even suicidal. They will simply cause Burundi to descend into hell in security, political and economic terms. These actions cause the defence and security forces to lose credibility.

12. In fact, in recent months, the evolution of the peace process has shown clear signs of a political class that is divided, although the signing of the Arusha Agreement on 28 August 2000 should have signalled the start of a new drive to peace. Nearly 12 months have elapsed since then, yet we still have a considerable way to go in order to complete the peace process.

III. The next stages of the peace process

13. The search for a ceasefire remains the top priority. The great challenge facing the signatory parties is to adopt a new common attitude to tackle this thorny question, to make the necessary contacts or to bring pressure to bear on the subregional, regional and international partners and, finally, to demand that sanctions be imposed on the armed groups if, in three months time, the negotiation process is not really under way. It is worth pointing out that the absence of a ceasefire has adverse repercussions on the possibility of moving swiftly through the other stages of the peace process.

14. With regard to the transitional institutions, they will have to be established by 1 November 2001 at the latest. The draft laws necessary for the formation of a new Government and a new Parliament will soon be discussed and adopted by the Government, the National Assembly and the Implementation Monitoring Committee. If this is done swiftly, the Government would like the transitional institutions to be operational by 1 November 2001.

15. As to the other provisions of the Agreement which could be implemented immediately, the Government and the Implementation Monitoring Committee are in the process of taking stock of them prior to drawing up a realistic timetable for implementation.

16. These are the next three important stages of the peace process, the success of which depends essentially on the will and cohesion of the signatory parties, the armed groups and the population. That is why it is vital to create conditions conducive to peace and stability.

IV. The need to create a new climate conducive to peace and national reconciliation

17. It is time to put an end to physical and verbal violence, suspicion, resentment, division, rivalry, confrontation and misplaced militantism and to engage in a new process which promotes responsibility of the people of Burundi, confidence, cohesion, reconciliation and belief in a common and shared future.

18. It is time for the political class to surpass itself and to concern itself with the interests of the population; the latter can no longer meet its basic needs and is still waiting for a gleam of hope from the politicians.

19. It is time for the armed groups to opt clearly for the path of negotiations, to renounce indiscriminate violence and to put forward their political demands. Refusal

to do so would be an admission on their part that they are pursuing unacceptable goals and that the people of Burundi should fight together to resist them.

20. It is time for the people of Burundi to believe in themselves; we must demonstrate our pride and our dignity by appropriating and together pursuing the peace process within the country, in the interest of all the people of Burundi.

21. In short, the moment of truth has come. We can continue to confront one another or be divided, thereby going along with the rebellion. Alternatively, we can choose to unite to implement a common programme, without reservation, thereby giving a decisive push to the peace process. Naturally, we invite you all, beginning with the signatory parties, to opt for the latter alternative. That is the only alternative that brings any hope and that can put an end to a conflict which has already claimed too many lives and lasted too long.

Bujumbura, 27 July 2001